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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20
EB-08 HA-05 /092 W
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R 261300Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8333
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

UNCLAS QUITO 3519

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: ADMIRAL POVEDA COMMEMORATES BATTLE OF PICHINCHA WITH MAJOR POLICY ADDRESS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ECUADOREAN LEADERS TRADITIONALLY HAVE USED THE MAY 24 CEREMONIES COMMEMORATING THE DECISIVE BATTLE FOR ECUADOREAN INDEPENDENCE, THE BATTLE OF PICHINCHA, TO GIVE MAJOR POLICY ADDRESSES. ADMIRAL POVEDA PROVED NO EXCEPTION IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS YEAR'S CELEBRATION TO DELIVER ONE OF THE FEW MAJOR POLICY-ORIENTED ADDRESSES OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. HIS COMMENTS DEALT PRIMARILY WITH THE RETORNO PROCESS AND THE NEED FOR STRONG, ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTIES TO INSURE THE SUCCESS OF DEMOCRACY IN ECUADOR. HE ALSO REFERRED, HOWEVER, TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. POVEDA BEGAN THE SUBSTANTIVE PORTION OF HIS REMARKS BY REITERATING THE INTENTION OF THE MILITARY TO CARRY THROUGH THE CHANGEOVER TO CIVILIAN, CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. HE ATTACKED THOSE WHO HAVE CHALLENGED THE LEGITIMACY OF THE
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PROCESS, NOTING THAT THE MILITARY CHOSE THIS ROUTE PRECISELY BECAUSE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION HAS BYPASSED TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS (PRESUMABLY SUCH AS CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLIES) AND RETURNING TO THEM WOULD ONLY INVITE DISASTER. POVEDA ALSO PRAISED THE NEW CONSTITUTION ADOPTED IN THE JANUARY REFERENDUM. REFERRING TO THE EXTENTION OF THE VOTE TO ILLITERATES, HE NOTED THAT THE

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NEW CONSTITUTION PROVIDES A ROLE FOR ALL ECUADOREANS IN
THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY.

3. THE MAJOR PART OF HIS ADDRESS WAS DIRECTED TO THE
SUBJECT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE
FUTURE OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN ECUADOR. HE IDENTIFIED
PARTIES AS THE VEHICLE FOR THE PEOPLE TO RELATE TO THE
POLITICAL SYSTEM, AND THUS INDISPENSIBLE TO A FUNCTIONING
DEMOCRACY. HE SAID THE PARTIES MUST THEREFORE HAVE
CLEAR DOCTRINES, PLANS OF ACTION AND PROGRAMS FOR GOVERNING
THE COUNTRY, AND MUST BE DETERMINED TO PROMOTE THE NATIONAL
GOOD. IN ORDER TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY, THEY MUST BE
STRENGTHENED, ENLARGED, AND RESTRUCTURED. HE EXPRESSED
CONFIDENCE THAT THIS PROCESS WOULD DEVELOP WITH TIME
ALTHOUGH THE BEGINNING MIGHT BE DIFFICULT SINCE THE COUNTRY
HAD SUFFERED FOR SO MANY YEARS UNDER THE BURDEN OF
"PERSONALISM, CAUDILLISM, AND DE FACTO GOVERNMENTS".

4. POVEDA EMPHASIZED THAT POLITICAL PARTIES MUST BE
LARGE IN SIZE AND BROADLY BASED IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE
DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERS AND CAPABLE GOVERNORS. LARGE,
RESPONSIBLE PARTIES, HE SAID, WILL ALSO MEAN LEGITIMATE,
RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION, AFTER THE ELECTIONS BRING ONE OR
THE OTHER TO POWER. THE BROAD BASE THAT CHARACTERIZES
THESE LARGE PARTIES WILL MAKE MORE DIFFICULT THE DEVELOP-
MENT OF EXTREMIST POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS.
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5. POVEDA THEN REAFFIRMED THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
HAS NO "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE OR PARTY. HE NOTED WITH
PLEASURE THAT ALL OF THE PARTIES APPEAR TO BE COMING
TO GRIPS WITH PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY AND DEVELOPING
CONCEPTS AND POLICIES TO RESOLVE THEM. HE CALLED ON THEM
TO BURY ONCE AND FOR ALL THE USE OF IRRESPONSIBLE
ACCUSATIONS, CALUMNY, AND SLANDER. BY TAKING POSITIVE
AND MORALLY HIGH POSITIONS, HE SAID, THEY WILL INCREASE
THE SUPPORT OF CITIZENS AND ACTIVISTS.

6. POVEDA THEN SHIFTED ABRUPTLY INTO A DISCUSSION OF
THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS, DEALING SPECIFICALLY
WITH CURRENT PETROLEUM POLICY, THE PUBLIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE
WORKS IT HAS PRODUCED, AND THE WILLINGNESS OF THAT
GOVERNMENT TO TAKE HARD DECISIONS, AND NOT SIMPLY AVOID
DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN ORDER TO PASS THEM ON TO ITS CIVILIAN
SUCCESSOR. HE PROMISED THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT
WILL MAKE A GREATER EFFORT TO MAKE PUBLIC ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

7. HE REITERATED THE FULL COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT
TO THE "TRIUMPHOF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY" AND ITS

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DESIRE THAT ECUADOR BE AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRESS, PEACE,
UNITY, ORDER, JUSTICE AND LIBERTY. HE DEFENDED THE
ACTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THESE AREAS, ASCRIBING TO IT
A HUMANIST CONCEPTION OF POLITICS. HE STATED HIS BELIEF
THAT ALL ACTIONS OF THE STATE MUST HAVE AS THEIR GOAL
THE PROTECTION OF MAN AND GUARANTEE OF HIS RIGHTS, AND
SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS RECOGNIZED AND PROMOTED
THE BROAD RANGE OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HUMAN RIGHTS.

8. COMMENT: POVEDA INTENDED THIS SPEECH TO ACCOMPLISH
SEVERAL GOALS. HE AGAIN REITERATED TO SKEPTICS IN NO
UNCERTAIN TERMS THE INTENTION OF THE MILITARY THAT THE
RETORNO WILL PROCEED TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLUSION. HE
ALSO DEFENDED THE PROCESS THE MILITARY HAD CHOSEN FOR
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THE RETORNO, AS ONE ADEQUATE TO THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY TODAY. SECOND, HE GAVE A CLEAR
PICTURE OF HOW THE MILITARY (OR AT LEAST HE HIMSELF)
FEELS THE POLITICAL SYSTEM SHOULD OPERATE: BASED ON A
LIMITED NUMBER OF LARGE PARTIES REPRESENTING BROAD
MASES THROUGH IDENTIFIABLE IDEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES.
THIS IS A CONTINUING CONCEPT IN POVEDA'S THINKING AND
PROBABLY UNDERLIES AT LEAST PART OF THE MILITARY'S
EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING PARTIES
AND CANDIDATES TO A REASONABLE LEVEL. FINALLY, HE TOOK
THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND THE CONDUCT OF HIS GOVERNMENT.
AS THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN DEVELOPS, THERE HAS BEEN
INCREASING CRITICISM OF THE MILITARY'S PERFORMANCE IN
POWER AND CANDIDATES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO TAR ONE ANOTHER
BY TYING THEM TO THE POLICIES OF THIS GOVERNMENT. POVEDA
IS PROUD OF WHAT HE HAS DONE IN OFFICE, AND THIS CRITICISM
MUST STING. HE LEFT NO DOUBT THAT, WHATEVER IS SAID, HE
BELIEVES HIS CONDUCT IN OFFICE HAS BEEN HONORABLE AND HAS
WORKED TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF ECUADOR.

9. THE SPEECH ITSELF SHOULD HAVE NO MAJOR REPERCUSSIONS
SINCE IT INTRODUCED NO NEW OR STARLING ISSUES TO THE POLITICAL
PROCESS. IT IS BEST SEEN AS BOTH AN APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA
AND A LECTURE FROM A SELF-PERCEIVED FATHER FIGURE TO HIS
SOMETIMES-WAYWARD FLOCK ON HOW TO CONDUCT THEIR AFFAIRS
IN THE FUTURE.
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